

REMARKS

The application is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1-17, 19, and 20 are pending. Claims 1 and 13 are independent.

Claim 20 has been amended to depend from claim 13 directly. This is not believed to create a new issue as claim 5 is of similar scope, as to the sizing and spacing of the individual printed parts.

There are no formal matters outstanding.

The Official Action rejected claims 1-11, 13-14 16, and 19-20 as obvious over PRICONE et al. 5,213,872 in view of NILSEN et al. 6,258,443.

Claims 12 and 17 stand rejected as obvious over PRICONE et al. and NILSEN et al. in further view of OCHI et al. 6,110,574.

Claims 1-6, 9-13, 16-17, and 19-20 stand rejected as obvious over OCHI et al. in view of PRICONE et al.

Claims 7-8, and 14 stand rejected as obvious over OCHI et al. and PRICONE et al. in further view of NILSEN et al.

Claim 15 stands rejected as obvious over OCHI et al. and PRICONE et al. in further view of METHA et al. 6,416,911.

Claims 1 and 13 each recite "the discontinuous and printed parts being isolated from one another, a maximum printed length of each part being 10 mm or smaller, an interval of isolation between each part and an adjacent part being at least 1 mm at the narrowest."

By providing a printed layer with individual printed parts of this size and spacing, the present invention exhibits the advantageous effects that the discontinuous and individual printed parts are isolated from each other so that even when water or solvent enters the interface between the fluorine-containing resin film and the printed layer, as a result of outdoor use or a cleaning operation with a solvent to remove stains or dirt, the penetrating water or solvent stays in the independent printed parts and is not allowed to spread all over the retroreflective sheeting.

It is only the present invention that makes this disclosure and would therefore suggest that the individual printed parts be sized and spaced as recited. Without the motivation provided by the present disclosure, there is no motivation to optimize the spacing as recited.

None of the newly cited references provide any motivation for the individual printed parts to have the sizing and spacing recited.

PRICONE et al. teach printed legends 204 and 206. These legends are, in themselves, almost the same size of the road signs (regulatory signs). Such signs are clearly greater than 10 mm in length and teach away from the present recited sizing and spacing.

On page 4 of the Official Action, it is acknowledged that PRICONE et al. fail to teach the recited spacing, the spacing being said to be routine optimization. However, where the legends are the size of the sign, spacing at, e.g., 1 mm as per claims 5 and 20 would be unnecessarily narrow given the nature of the product/process disclosed by PRICONE et al.

The disclosure in column 4, line 50 through column 5, line 15 of PRICONE et al. seems to relate to the embossing equipment and not the resulting product. Therefore, the passage is not believed to support the proposition that it would be obvious to space apart, at 1 mm, signs having a dimension of 57" in width and 115" in circumference (column 4, lines 55-58). The equipment disclosed by the reference does not appear to have a cutting accuracy that would motivate one of skill to reduce the spacing to a mere 1 mm.

Also, PRICONE et al. do not teach each printed part, i.e., sign, being no more than 10 mm in length. As

noted above, the signs are disclosed as being 57" in width and 115" in circumference (column 4, lines 55-58).

For the type product being disclosed by PRICONE et al., road signs, there is no benefit taught to comprise a large 57" width sign of small printed parts having the spacing and sizing recited. Absent such teaching, the rejection amounts to an "anything is possible" rejection. Although anything might be possible, there is no motivation to move in the direction recited by the claims.

As the obviousness rejection is not believed to be viable, withdrawal of the rejections over PRICONE et al. alone or together with NILSEN et al. is solicited.

Claims 1-6, 9-13, 16-17, and 19-20 stand rejected as obvious over OCHI et al., in view of PRICONE et al.

OCHI et al. also do not teach the recited printed discontinuous and individual parts, as per Official Action page 6, first full paragraph.

As urged above, PRICONE et al. also fail to teach the recited sized and spaced individual parts.

Thus, the combination must necessarily fail to teach these recitations. Withdrawal of this rejection is also solicited.

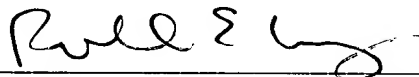
Applicants believe it is clear that any argument that would result in the recited dimensions could fairly only be based on impermissible hindsight. Accordingly, withdrawal of the obviousness rejections and allowance of all the pending claims are respectfully requested.

Applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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